



The Onyx Informer

in the line of fire

Northeastern University

Northeastern's Newspaper Designed for People of Color

February 15, 1995



Dr. Leonard Jeffries.

Photo by ASPIRES

Dr. Leonard Jeffries is currently the Chair of the African Studies Department at City College of New York (CUNY). This critical position has afforded the African community insights and access to the educational system as designed in America.

Dr. Jeffries has achieved the designation Ph.D., but he consistently reminds us that his million dollar education is penniless without his knowledge of self, society and the world. He is dedicated to understanding our most glorious and grand place in history as well as prompting us to realize our fullest potential. Dr. Jeffries, in

his earnest attempt to bring light to the world, has been honored among African scholars and, moreover, among his students as he insists that they become critical thinkers. He teaches them (us) to

- Let the light of Africa shine
- Study and struggle
- Give all power to the African family.

He is regarded as a foremost authority on Africa. He has traveled to the continent more than fifty times. He is a chief and a leader among the Asbanti nation. He is a close and personal friend of the Paramount Chief.

Dr. "J", as he is

affectionately referred to by his students, is a leading voice and theoretician in the African-centered movement taking place today. He is a found director of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC) and serves as second Vice President. He is also past president of the African Heritage Studies Association.

He is loved by his wife, family and the African Community. His work is his legacy. Dr. Jeffries truly is a hero to his people.

Reprinted from The Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations.

A Letter from President Curry

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
Northeastern University

January 26, 1995

Members of the University Community:

The perverse views and shoddy scholarship of Leonard Jeffries violate the most basic principles of historical inquiry and are inimical to honest, accurate and responsible scholarship. I deplore the unfounded selectivity, irrational speculation and ideological bias of his statements and writings, and I hope all members of this academic community find them as offensive and contemptible as I do.

Nonetheless, it is the policy of this university and it is my firm belief that the principles of open inquiry and intellectual freedom which lie at the heart of any academic enterprise must be preserved and defended even in the face of the most despicable and baseless words and ideas. Indeed, the true test of our commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech arises in the context of just such unpalatable writings and speech.

I have said often in the past that hatred and bigotry thrive in darkness and ignorance. Brought into the open and exposed to the light of truth, they wither and die. And where, if not at the University is the appropriate forum for open airing and convincing refutation of views that engender hatred and bigotry?

Professor Jeffries has been invited to speak at the University on February 16, sponsored by Haitian Student Unity, a recognized Northeastern student organization. I have asked Provost Baer to arrange an alternative forum at an appropriate time and place on campus at which the falsehoods and sophistries of Professor Jeffries may be exposed, disputed and corrected. I will also assure that no direct University administration funds be used to support Professor Jeffries' appearance.

If Professor Jeffries accepts the invitation to speak on campus, I ask all of you to join me in making his appearance an occasion to demonstrate our civility, our tolerance, our commitment to academic freedom and, above all, our vigorous opposition to the ideas and methods he espouses.

John A. Curry
President

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opinion

Educating ourselves... *no one will do it for us*

By Ahsha Ali Safai
Special to *The Onyx*

Emotions ran high as individuals from Northeastern's Black student unions got together to discuss the imminent arrival of Professor Leonard Jeffries on the sixteenth of this month. The forum was organized by the Haitian Student Union.

The discourse began by trying to answer two major questions: first, what was professor Jeffries actually professing and did he deserve the ridicule, chastisement and labels he had received in the past? Second, what did the now infamous memorandum from President John A. Curry's office to faculty and staff mean, and how should this be perceived by Northeastern's Black student body? These were two very in-depth questions. Therefore, the forum embarked to answer them, and in the process evoked thoughtful responses.

John Marra-Youte, president of the Haitian Student Union and others present showed disgust and outrage as to how President Curry could so coldly and unprofessionally degrade, humiliate, and disregard their judgement and choice. The idea that not one attempt had been made by President Curry to consult or discuss the selection made by the Haitian Student Union of their guest speaker seemed unthinkable to all present. The general consensus was, "How can we take this? This is a slap in the face to all Black students on campus. Their questioning our ability to choose our own speaker and guest and not even giving the man a chance to defend himself. It seems to me that Curry didn't do his homework."

As the night proceeded and the film of Professor Jeffries speech at Harvard University was played, his true message became clearer; intellectual as well as self-upliftment; primarily for African-Americans, but in general for all people. It became clear to all that Professor Jefferies was not anti-Semitic, if he ever were, rather he is a man who seeks the truth in history and in his own words, "History speaks for itself."

An enormous amount of exchange went back and forth over the issue of President Curry's total disregard for Professor Jefferies intent and meaning in his past speeches. At the same time the issue of validity of Professor Jefferies work itself arouse, and in the end a challenge was issued by Lula Petty, Director and Dean of the John D. O'Bryant African-American Institute said, "We have all agreed tonight that this is a wake-up call for all of us. We need to come together and be more unified, but we also need to study "that" which is not taught to us in our curriculum. If the man (Professor Jefferies) is telling the truth then let us back him up. But if the man is lying then let us go there with evidence and say why he is wrong. What it all boils down to is we have to educate ourselves because in the end no one will do it for us!"

With these inspiring words President Youte closed the forum. People stayed to discuss their plans as to how they would deal with their outrage and anger over President Curry's insensitivity. Most left with a feeling of the need to stand up and unite their energy in a common cause. But in general everyone left feeling sure that the Haitian Student Union had made the right, not the wrong choice in Professor Leonard Jefferies—a man of historical reality.

The Onyx Informer

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Please address letters to:
The Onyx Informer, Northeastern University, Room
430 Eli Center, Boston, MA 02115, (617) 373-2250.

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the author and not necessarily those of the
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Informer Editorial Board.



reactions

February 14, 1995

Dear President Curry:

In light of the letter that you presented to the members of the University community on January 26, 1995, we the Black Student Body find your unsubstantiated opinions regarding Professor Jeffries to be biased and an insult to professional scholarship. "Doctor," as defined by Webster's Dictionary refers to a person who has achieved the highest degree from a University, which is the title that Dr. Leonard Jeffries had earned. Unfortunately, your inability to recognize this in your own letter gives us no choice, but to conclude that your actions and behaviors are quite uncivil.

President Curry, are you able to inform the Northeastern Community of content of Dr. Jeffries presentation to the University? Of course not, because it has not yet occurred. Therefore, how can you express in a letter to the University your disapproval of Dr. Jeffries' visit to our campus, when for all you know, this scholar could be speaking on diversity or community service? The tone of your letter suggest that you, your mission, and ideas on this will be threatened by Dr. Jeffries lecture. You stated in your letter that Dr. Jeffries' statements and writings are "despicable" and filled with "baseless words and ideas." Where then are your facts to support your opinions?

It is absolutely insulting that you would use your executive power to request that no University administrative funds be used for this event. Prior to our letter, we sincerely believed that your administration was attempting to embrace all within the University community as equally important and respected.

We understand that the highly decorated, retired grand wizard of the Klu Klux Klan, David Duke, was a sponsored speaker by the Ford Hall Forum, an organization financially backed by Northeastern University. In retrospect, your bold actions remind us of Alabama Governor George Wallace. He also practiced collegiate censorship by standing in the doorways of the University of Alabama in order to prevent freedom of education.... "Free should the scholar be - free and brave, for fear is a thing which scholar, by his very function, puts behind him."

Sincerely,
Black Student Community
Northeastern University



expressions

Dark Days of Illussion

Echoes

of

cry

scream of Malcolm, Medger, Emmit
and me where do we move from this
token integration propaganda? Your
names being talk through history
while small man immortalize your
consciousness in the midst of
intellectual conversations.

But

evermore

words

of self-development ring our ears
while small man yearn for direction.
Progress, progress the house Negro
says, we have come a long way but
in the bull's eye powerlessness,
endure in the slave community.

John-Marra Youte

Glory Falls

Glory falls around us
as we sob
a dirge of
desolation on the Cross
and hatred is the ballast of
the rock

which lies upon our necks
and underfoot.

We have woven
robes of silk
and clothed our nakedness
with tapestry.

From crawling on this
murky planet's floor
we soar beyond the
birds and
through the clouds
and edge our way from hate
and blind despair and
bring honor
to our brothers, and to our
sisters cheer.

We grow despite the
horror that we feed
upon our own
tomorrow.

We grow.

Maya Angelou

BLACK FACTS

FEBRUARY 15TH

1964

Louis Armstrong's "Hello, Dolly" becomes the number one record on Billboard's Top 40 Charts.

1968

Henry Lewis becomes the first African-American to lead a symphony orchestra in the United States.

1969

Noted historian John Henrik Clarke, speaking before the Jewish Currents Conference in New York City, says, "You cannot subjugate a man and recognize his humanity, his history... so systematically you must take this away from him. You begin by telling lies about the man's role in history."

1992

At memorial services attended by over 1,600 in Memphis, TN, author Alex Haley (*Roots, Autobiography of Malcolm X*) is eulogized by his wife, who says, "Thank you, Alex, you have helped us know who we truly are."